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INTERVIEWEE Geoffrey Charles VERGE

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Tape: IEA SYD FJ 10 Side A

TAPE LOG

TAPE COUNTER	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEYWORDS
0 - 232	<p>Born 1932 Lagambie, Central Victoria. . Father a self- made man. Mother's father was Swiss. A vigneron, he had vineyard on Goulburn River, grandfather was a woodcutter and carrier. Father had a garage in town, expanded into earthmoving equipment, bought properties and died wealthy. A life of hard work and little relaxation. As a lad Geoffrey was a studious lad, whereas his brother was a "tearaway ". Geoff. Showed early promise as a scholar. Recognized as having potential by one of his early teachers at primary school, a nun. He went to boarding school at 10, and was very advanced, having been coached in Algebra by his primary teacher, - an early influence in his life. His family valued the work ethic and this trait came naturally to him. One thing he remembers from War was the building of an air raid shelter in the small town. Career intentions were not manifested early. Interested in farming; holidays on a sheep and wheat farm. At secondary school, had reputation of being "a clever kid" He expected to come 1st as a matter of course a high achiever. His son has similar bent. Admired his grandfather who was self-educated , with little formal education. He worked on Bayliston Reservoir during Depression. Sport? Yes, football, cricket, tennis, good ball skills. Football, with risk of injury, he found less appealing. . An engineering interest was a late development. He matriculated at 16 yrs too early to go on to Uni. So he sat a second time and included French and Latin in his subjects At a Careers Night one of the speakers told of the life of a consulting engineer. He decided to do Engineering, the common perception of its difficulty a challenge that he was glad to accept. He believed he did not work as hard as he should, leaving study until close to exam time. Observations on Engineering vs. Medicine as careers. He had won a scholarship to Newman College. Felt he didn't work as hard as he might have, did achieve an honours Engineering Degree and an Exhibition in Hydraulics</p>	<p>Born Lagambie Vic.</p> <p>Newman College</p>

Tape FJ 10 Side A continued

Tape Log

TAPE COUNTER	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEYWORDS
232 - 282	Prof. Arthur Francis of Melbourne University, assisted in getting G.V. a job with Sir William Halcrow and Partners, Civil Engineers in London. He sailed to U.K. in 1955. He was placed in the Park Lane office. Partner in charge was Horace Entram Walgram. The office was next to Dorchester Hotel. It had a hydraulics laboratory in basement, where H.E.W. did research. G.V. was placed in a special projects section, which did smaller jobs and feasibility studies, non-routine work that he found very congenial. First job was design of a fish ladder, in Galway, Western Ireland. Did total job, investigation, design and detail drafting	Prof. Arthur Francis Prof. Moorhouse Melbourne University London placement Sir William Halcrow Horace Entram Walgram
283 -399	The salary was very small, nine pound ten shillings per week. Next job was design and construction of floodgates for London Underground Railway stations to prevent flooding. This was of particular concern as these had been used as bomb shelters during War, and could be in future conflicts, when such flooding would cause a major disaster. A system was devised that automatically closed the floodgates. Because of train traffic, working access to the stations was limited to a few hours before dawn each day. Another job was a pipeline for Esso, at Southampton. Anecdotes re working colleagues. After a year, his flatmates had moved on, and meeting someone in London who was going to Canada, G.V. decided also to go. Finding employment in Canada was not difficult. He took a position with C.D. Howe, consultants. C.D. Howe had developed innovative ways of unloading rail cars full of grain, arriving in Montreal, from the West with grain for shipment overseas. These consultants also designed the first nuclear power station in Canada. Canadian engineers had no misgiving on use of nuclear energy for power generation, thinking it a good thing to have developed a peace- time use for atomic energy.	London Underground Floodgates Esso pipeline Southampton Canada C.D. Howe Montreal
399 - 483	Returned home from Vancouver in 1957. He liked the range of work in Canada, but not the weather. Relationship between French and English in workplace quite harmonious. Comments on French/English situation in Quebec, and the political strains of those times - which got worse. Speaks of bi-lingual aspects of life in Eastern Canada - particularly in Montreal. No friction English/French Canadians in the workplace. On return to Australia took up teaching Civil Engineering at the Caulfield Institute in Victoria. He began teaching in the first year that Civil Engineering studies were undertaken at Caulfield, and formulated the course and taught all subjects therein. Jack Keppert was the head of Caulfield at this time, and had always wanted to provide a Civil Eng. Course there. Referred to dual system of tertiary studies in Victoria - Degrees and Diplomas. Degrees at Melbourne University and Diplomas at Swinburn and Caulfield. He enjoyed teaching, and ensured there was a strong practical bias in the Course, his students mixed concrete, undertook testing, etc. He organized tours of manufacturers of building products and the Snowy Mountains engineering achievements.	Return to Australia 1957 Caulfield Institute Jack Keppert

Tape FJ 10 Side B

TAPE COUNTER	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEY WORDS
0 -104	In 1960 obtained a position with Scott & Furphy Consultants. Main activities were sewerage systems, treatment works, and hydraulic and structural design. After six months was appointed personal assistant to Harry Furphy, supervising a number of engineers designing and supervising fieldwork. It was a busy time with lots of projects. Designed systems for Portland, Casterton, Sale, St Arnaud, Maryborough, and Ararat. Resident engineer in these locations. In 1959 had married in Portland, and set about raising a family, a son & daughter. Spoke warmly of Harry Furphy and his warm personality and considerable intellectual gifts. He acted for H.F. during his absences, developing an expertise in dealing with the problems of contract administration, which he found of great interest, and very different to the technical subjects taught in training to be an engineer. Commented on the differences in formal engineering studies in U.K. and Australia. University training in Aus. was on a more practical basis than in U.K. Post grad. training in U.K. very good. Comments on "learning by doing". Moved on to Kinnaird Hill deRohan & Young in 1963 as Associate Director and Melbourne Branch Manager, because of limited prospects for speedy advancement with S & F. He was a "young man in a hurry". K. H. deR. & Y quite different, a new Company formed by young proteges of Prof. Bull, of Adelaide University. With this Company, the activities involved provision of civil design services to Architectural firms and they required working close to the limits of design, the optimum use of time and resources receiving great emphasis	1960 Scott & Furphy Harry Furphy 1963 Kinnaird Hill deRohan & Young
105 - 146		
147 - 179	In 1965 joined the Cement & Concrete Association as Divisional Manager Melbourne office. Soon promoted to Head Office, Sydney as their Chief Engineer, where main activity was research and development in concrete design and application. The Association grew rapidly, with Divisional Engineers in all States, applying research that had been undertaken in U.S. and U.K., for new uses of concrete. G.V. responded with enthusiasm to the challenge of this new activity, finding that he had a flair for communicating ideas to groups of architects and engineers. He took a group of architects on a study mission to Japan where concrete usage was very advanced. The Association received generous funding from the Cement Manufacturing Industry at that time. Ready Mixed Concrete was separate organization. Use of concrete for roads and houses was receiving increasing attention, and structural application in multi-story buildings, was replacing steel frame construction. After 5 years, was offered a position, through Bill Brown, whose company was associated with civil consultants, Harris & Sutherland. Came to Sydney in 1972, where first main project was the pre-cast concrete bridge at Alfords Point, spanning the Georges River. Spoke of other projects, including design & construct projects, undertaken during this period, particularly concrete water reservoirs. Application of thin-wall concrete design to reservoirs. Design criteria & prac. problems	1965 Cement & Concrete Association
180 -284		
285 -310		Bill Brown Harris & Sutherland 1972
311 -320	In 1974 he discussed with a colleague, John Reid the possibilities of introducing reinforced earth construction House Bros. was enthusiastic about process, and after a visit to	

TAPE COUNTER	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEYWORDS
	Tape FJ 10 Side B (Continued)	
321 – 387	France to investigate the design criteria, a start was made to apply the new technology in Australia. NSW Dept. of Main Roads was an early customer. The process was an invention of a French architect/engineer, Henri Vidal, making use of granular soils as a structural material by reinforcement with ribbed steel straps. Many large projects completed in France. Corrosion of steel was an obvious problem but this could be controlled by ensuring a suitable pH. level in soils used. Lower costs a great advantage compared with reinf. conc. design. Over the next 15 years G.V.'s Coy completed over 300 structures. G.V. further outlines design criteria.	Reinforced earth construction. 1974 John Reid John Reid House Bros. Henri Vidal
388 – 403	After Cyclone Tracey, a contract was secured to design and construct 500 cyclone proof concrete houses for PDC Constructions in Darwin	Cyclone Tracey, Darwin PDC Constructions
404 – 462	. Shortly after, the Singapore Govt. went out to tender for systems-built flats, and G.V. won a contract for 15000 flats in 130 high rise buildings, in association with PDC Constructions, or White Constructions as they were known, after a take-over of the Coy.	Singapore Housing Board
463 – 478	G.V. discussed the Singapore Housing Board and its modus operandi. Construction techniques for the building elements of the flats. Observations on lift-slab construction Career start in Arbitration activities	Spandek
1 – 191	Tape FJ 11 Side A Disputes are mainly about money. Differences between commercial and legal resolution of disputes –legal about winning and losing—commercial resolution is about "cutting a deal" both parties can live with. Role of the expert witness is sometimes misunderstood by engineers -- duties to the court vs. duties to the client. Competence of legal council in identifying the key issues in a dispute – effectiveness of court references for determining technical issues. Arbitration not always the best method for dispute resolution; it can be more costly than the courts. Most common faults causing disputes are design mistakes, communication problems, and poor administration of contracts.	
191 – 284	Pressure on fees inevitably leads to cost cutting in the design and construction process – this situation getting worse over time. Consulting firms are getting larger with global amalgamations. Still niches for small specialised firms.	
285 – 326	Conditions of Contract – observations on various Conditions. Effect of burgeoning 'Special Conditions' - Issues of responsibility and authority	
326 – 455	Problems are universal. I.e. U.S, Europe etc. Mediation becoming more common in dispute resolution. "Concrete Cancer" no longer a problem in the 90's. Chemistry of the process. Importance of conscientious quality control. Liability of designers at law. Engineers share the flak with medicos, financial advisers etc. The public has been conditioned expect perfection. The "find someone to blame, and recover at law" syndrome. Attitude is universal.	
456 – 484	Darling Harbour; the flagpole, other projects	
485 -- 501		